

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-01

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 /054 W

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R 011922Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5324

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 14302

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PWT, PGOV, UK

SUBJECT: WILSON LAYS LAW DOWN TO CABINET

REF: LONDON 14206

SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER WILSON REACTED TO THE LABOR PARTY'S NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (NEC) RESOLUTION CONDEMNING RECENT UK/SOUTH AFRICAN NAVAL EXERCISES BY SHARPLY REBUKING THREE GOVERNMENT MINISTERS (BENN, HART AND LESTOR) WHO SUPPORTED THE RESOLUTION. THEY WERE REMINDED OF THE CABINET'S COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR
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GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND ACTIONS AND TOLD TO RESIGN IF

THEY ARE UNABLE MEET THIS OBLIGATION. WILSON ALSO MOVED TO NEUTRALIZE AN NEC WATCHDOG COMMITTEE WHICH HAD BEEN CRITICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT'S EC NEGOTIATIONS. THESE DEVELOPMENTS INDICATE WILSON IS MOVING TO COUNTER LEFT-WING EFFORTS TO FRUSTRATE HIS POLICIES AND TO DRIVE HOME THE FACT THAT LABOR'S LEFT-WING NEEDS THE SUPPORT OF PARTY MODERATES AS BADLY AS THEY NEED THAT OF THE LEFT-WING. ALTHOUGH WILSON'S ASSERTION OF AUTHORITY SHOULD STRENGTHEN GOVERNMENT COHESION IN THE SHORT TERM, IT IS TOO EARLY TO COUNT THE LEFT-WING OUT. END SUMMARY

1. STUNG BY THE NEC RESOLUTION DEPLORING HIS GOVERNMENT'S ACTION IN PERMITTING JOINT UK/SOUTH AFRICAN NAVAL EXERCISES (REFTEL) WHICH WAS SUPPORTED BY THREE GOVERNMENT MINISTERS SITTING ON THE NEC, PRIME MINISTER WILSON IS REPORTED TO HAVE STRONGLY LECTURED THE CABINET ON ITS COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY ON OCTOBER 31. ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, THE REBUKE WAS DIRECTED AT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDUSTRY ANTHONY BENN, MINISTER OF OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT JUDITH HART AND JUNIOR FCO MINISTER JOAN LESTOR.

2. WILSON RESPONDED TO THE OFFENDING MINISTERS' BREACH OF COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY BY REASSERTING THEIR DUTY TO UPHOLD GOVERNMENT DECISIONS IN ALL PUBLIC FORA AND. IF THEY SHOULD BE UNABLE TO MEET THIS REQUIREMENT, HE IS REPORTED TO HAVE SAID, THEY SHOULD RETIRE TO THE BACK BENCHES. HE IS ALSO REPORTED TO HAVE FORBIDDEN CABINET MEMBERS TO SUPPORT FUTURE NEC RESOLUTIONS CRITICAL OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES.

3. IN A PARALLEL ACTION REINFORCING HIS DICTUM ON COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY, WILSON ASSERTED HIS RIGHT TO NAME THE CABINET MEMBERS WHO WILL SIT ON A SPECIAL NEC WATCHDOG COMMITTEE OVERSEEING COMMON MARKET RENEGOTIATIONS. THIS COMMITTEE HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN DOMINATED BY ANTI-MARKETEERS, INCLUDING SEVERAL CABINET MINISTERS, AND DURING THE PAST SUMMER LEAKED A STAFF REPORT CHARGING

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 14302

THAT FOREIGN SECRETARY CALLAGHAN WAS DEVIATING FROM LABOR
PARTY POLICY IN THE CONDUCT OF THESE NEGOTIATIONS.

4. COMMENT: WILSON'S RESPONSE TO THE LEFT-WING'S FIRST
TEST OF HIS NEW GOVERNMENT NO DOUBT SURPRISED THE AUTHORS
WHO HAD GROWN BOLDER AS A RESULT OF HIS WEAK RESPONSES TO
THEIR EFFORTS TO EMBARRASS HIS LAST GOVERNMENT AND FRUST-
RATE ITS MODERATE POLICIES. HIS MOST RECENT ACTION SHOULD
STRENGTHEN DISCIPLINE IN THE CABINET AND THE PARLIAMEN-
TARY LABOR PARTY IN THE SHORT TERM, AS NO ONE IS PREPARED
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TO RISK AN OPEN SPLIT IN THE PARTY AT THIS TIME. THE NEC
ALSO VOTED TO JUNK THE ORIGINAL AGENDA FOR THE
ANNUAL LABOR PARTY CONFERENCE BECAUSE OF TIME CONSTRAINTS.
THIS AGENDA CONTAINED MANY RESOLUTIONS CONTRARY TO, OR
MORE EXTREME THAN, THE GOVERNMENT'S CURRENT POLICIES, AND
THIS PROVIDED MANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEFT-WING MISCHIEF
DURING THE RESCHEDULED CONFERENCE. THIS SHOULD ENABLE
THE CABINET EXERCISE A GREATER MEASURE OF CONTROL OVER
THE NOVEMBER 27-30 CONFERENCE. OVER THE LONGER TERM WE
EXPECT LABOR'S LEFT-WING WILL DEVISE NEW STRATEGIES TO

ADVANCE ITS DOCTRINAIRE INTERESTS. ACCORDINGLY, THE
ISSUE, THOUGH JOINED' IS BY NO MEANS RESOLVED.

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